



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Howard County Police Work to Increase Seat Belt Use *Police Departments Across Maryland Join Annual Chiefs' Challenge*

The Howard County Police Department is preparing to participate in the 2004 Maryland Chiefs' Challenge, which runs from April 6 through June 6.

The Maryland Chiefs' Challenge is an intensive education and enforcement campaign designed to raise awareness about the lifesaving and injury-reducing benefits of safety belt use. The program strives to achieve an 88 percent seat belt usage rate statewide by the end of 2004. When used correctly, lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal or serious injury to front seat passengers by 45 to 55 percent.

The focus of the Chiefs' Challenge is to enforce Maryland's seat belt and child safety seat laws. The goal is not only to reduce death and injuries, but also to reduce the health care costs associated with motor vehicle crashes. Nationally, traffic crashes cost \$150 billion a year, including \$17 billion in medical care costs.

The department has asked all officers to place special focus on seat belt and child safety seat enforcement efforts during this time period. The department also will be conducting periodic seatbelt and child safety seat checkpoints and inspections throughout the county.

The Howard County Police Department asks everyone to always buckle up and make seat belt use a habit for life.

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